

MILFORD HAVEN TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Full Council
held at the Torch Theatre, Milford Haven
on Monday 13th November 2023 at 6.15 pm

A Presentation by Mr. M. Cavanagh – Pembrokeshire County Council

PRESENT

The Deputy Mayor (Councillor W. D. Elliott BA QTS)

Councillors: K. Abbott	Mrs N. Beavis-Morrissey
L. J. Bridges	Miss V. Brown
E. A. Davies DipSM FJOIFF	Miss K. F. Gray
N. Hartevelde	C. Jones
C. A. Sharp	D. R. Sinnett
Miss T. Stevens	

Mrs B. J. Fitzgerald, Town Clerk

Two members of the public were also present.

Mr. M. Cavanagh (Head of Cultural, Leisure, Tourism and Registration Services),
Pembrokeshire County Council.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor W. D. Elliott BA QTS opened the meeting and welcomed Mr. Cavanagh.

Mr. Cavanagh gave a summary of the financial pressures facing Pembrokeshire County Council. There will be a need to reduce service budgets by approximately £25 million. Mr. Cavanagh explained that services had been 'rag rated' with the library service graded as Amber. There are 12 libraries within Pembrokeshire with 8 already supported by Town or Community Councils. Fishguard, Haverfordwest and Pembroke all give financial support. Other Councils help with volunteers and give financial support.

Cllr. C. Sharp asked if it would be advantageous to budget for a five-year plan. Mr. Cavanagh explained that a five-year plan would be helpful and if a five-year plan was put in place then it would be guaranteed that the costs would not change, they would be guaranteed to stay the same. To protect Milford Haven Library's opening hours for the 2024 / 2025 financial year, a financial contribution from the Town Council is being sought of £14,549 to protect a full day and an evening slot or £12,749 to protect one full day and lose the evening slot (5pm – 6pm). A discount could be offered to a fixed sum of £12,000 per annum for a 5-year agreement to protect a full opening day or £13,000 per annum for 5 years to protect both the full day and evening opening.

Pembrokeshire County Council has looked at using their own units, in particular the Leisure Centre in Milford Haven, but this was not feasible.

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It was mentioned that there are three units in Thornton which are not being rented at present. It was asked why these units are not generating income for Pembrokeshire County Council. Mr. Cavanagh expressed his disappointment that the units have not yet been advertised for rental as it had been agreed when he arranged moving out of those units to Haverfordwest. The units had been used as library back offices.

Mr. Cavanagh was asked if libraries were expected to return to pre-Covid levels. Mr. Cavanagh responded that the libraries are returning, not quite fully yet. People use the libraries for other things: printers, using computers, Wi-Fi, that cannot be afforded at home. There are groups like Knitter-natter. The vast majority of users still want real books; the need for libraries remains, social contact is still needed. The library supports warm spaces, individuals with physical or mental difficulties. People who are looking for work use the I.T. facilities; there is a children and baby book service. Most activities in libraries are free. Some, depending on the activity, would be chargeable.

Cllr. C. Jones asked about whether Pembrokeshire County Council still have mobile libraries. Mr. Cavanagh confirmed there is a mobile library which can also be booked for vulnerable people who are unable to leave their homes. The library comes to them, offers books, the librarian spends time with the user.

Cllr. Sinnett addressed rumours around the closure of Milford Haven Leisure Centre because of the serious financial implications. Mr. Cavanagh stated that everything is on the table for discussion over the necessary savings; however, there is no intention of closing the leisure centre. Running a swimming pool is very expensive; heating costs, water costs, it is a very expensive resource.

The Deputy Mayor, Cllr. W. D. Elliott BA QTS explained that the matter will be discussed further at Full Council at the end of November. If supported, the amount of financial assistance would be decided at the precept meeting in January 2024.

The Deputy Mayor thanked Mr. M. Cavanagh for presenting at the meeting.

The Meeting of the Full Council commenced at 7 pm.
